

CLAIMS

1       1. A distributed document handling system for carrying  
2 out jobs, where jobs are carried out by services distributed  
3 over a network and where a job leads to a product, the system  
4 comprising:

5           a pool of services, the services being distributed over a  
6 number of interconnected processing devices;

7           specifying means for entering a job specification  
8 comprising product specifications specifying the product to be  
9 delivered by the job and specifications specifying  
10 circumstantial constraints without effect on the product; and

11           determining means for determining a path of services, the  
12 services being selected from the pool of services, wherein the  
13 path is suitable to carry out the job in accordance with the  
14 product specifications, and wherein the determining means is  
15 operable to take into account circumstantial constraints for  
16 that job.

1       2. The distributed document handling system according to  
2 claim 1, wherein:

3       a circumstantial constraint defines a limit in an ordered  
4 range; the system also comprises:

5               means for ranking paths suitable to carry out the  
6 job in accordance with the ordered range of the  
7 circumstantial constraint; and

8               user interface means for selection by the user of a  
9 desired job specification from a ranked list of job  
10 specifications based on the ranked paths.

1       3. The distributed document handling system according to  
2 claim 2, wherein the system also comprises user interface  
3 means for selection by the user of the circumstantial  
4 constraint to be used in the ranking of the paths.

1       4. The distributed document handling system according to

2 claim 2, wherein the circumstantial constraint is a total  
3 price of the job to be carried out; and

4       the system also comprises means for calculating the total  
5 price from price attributes of services included in a  
6 determined path.